



ORIGINAL

“Counseling-Verse”: A Survey of Young Adults from Faith-Based Educational Institution on the Implementation of Future Mental Health Services in the Metaverse

“Counseling-Verse”: Una encuesta a jóvenes adultos de instituciones educativas confesionales sobre la implantación de futuros servicios de salud mental en el metaverso

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ABSTRACT

Objective: pastoral care in mental health interventions to prevent the spread of COVID-19 (such as lockdowns) put people's mental health and emotional well-being at jeopardy, especially today's young people. Because of their extensive use of screen-mediated solitary social media mixed with inadequate face-to-face interpersonal skills, they are more sensitive to mental health disorders such as loneliness, anxiety, and depression. Pastoral counseling treatments using Metaverse (aka “counseling-verse”), according to the authors, might become one of the most useful treatments available today.

Methods: the research method uses a quantitative approach with survey methods in collecting subject data, with a total of 143 young people participants.

Results: main findings were fivefold: (i) The majority of young people today know very well what the Metaverse is. (ii) The majority of young people have a positive view of the existence of the Metaverse, that they perceive this as something unique and as a technological development. (iii) The majority of young people agree with the counseling service at Metaverse. (iv) The reason they agree is because this counseling service at Metaverse can be a surefire solution to their current problems. (v) The majority of young people choose the type of individual counseling services and consultations on all mental health services provided on Metaverse.

Conclusions: based on the results of the research that has been carried out, it can be concluded that the pastoral counseling service at the Metaverse is one type of appropriate intervention and is the choice for young people today. Through this “counseling-verse” it is hoped that it can be a surefire solution to help young people who experience mental health issues such as loneliness, anxiety, and depression; as a result of public health measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 (such as lockdowns).

Keywords: Counseling-Verse; Mental Health Services; Metaverse; Counseling; Pastoral Care.

ABSTRACT

Objetivo: las intervenciones de salud mental para prevenir la propagación del COVID-19 (como los aislamientos) ponen en peligro la salud mental y el bienestar emocional de las personas, especialmente de los jóvenes de hoy en día. Debido a su uso extensivo de medios sociales solitarios mediados por pantallas, mezclado con habilidades interpersonales cara a cara inadecuadas, son más sensibles a trastornos de salud mental como la soledad, la ansiedad y la depresión. Según los autores, los tratamientos de asesoramiento

pastoral que utilizan el Metaverso (también conocido como “counseling-verse”) podrían convertirse en uno de los tratamientos más útiles disponibles en la actualidad.

Métodos: el método de investigación utiliza un enfoque cuantitativo con métodos de encuesta en la recogida de datos de los sujetos, con un total de 143 jóvenes participantes.

Resultados: Los principales resultados fueron cinco: (i) La mayoría de los jóvenes de hoy saben muy bien lo que es el Metaverso. (ii) La mayoría de los jóvenes tienen una visión positiva de la existencia del Metaverso, que perciben como algo único y como un desarrollo tecnológico. (iii) La mayoría de los jóvenes están de acuerdo con el servicio de asesoramiento de Metaverso. (iv) La razón por la que están de acuerdo es porque este servicio de asesoramiento en Metaverso puede ser una solución segura a sus problemas actuales. (v) La mayoría de los jóvenes eligen el tipo de servicios de asesoramiento individual y las consultas sobre todos los servicios de salud mental que se ofrecen en Metaverse.

Conclusiones: basándose en los resultados de la investigación que se ha llevado a cabo, se puede concluir que el servicio de asesoramiento pastoral en Metaverso es un tipo de intervención adecuada y es de elección de los jóvenes de hoy. A través de este “counseling-verse” se espera que pueda ser una solución segura para ayudar a los jóvenes que experimentan problemas de salud mental como la soledad, la ansiedad y la depresión; como resultado de las medidas de salud pública para prevenir la propagación del COVID-19 (como los encierros).

Palabras clave: Orientación-Verso; Servicios de Salud Mental; Metaverso; Asesoramiento; Cuidados Pastorales.

INTRODUCTION

Pastoral care and public health measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 (such as lockdowns) jeopardize mental health and emotional well-being, particularly among today's youth.^(1,2,3)

They are more vulnerable to mental health issues such as loneliness, anxiety, and depression⁽²⁾ as a result of their excessive use of screen-mediated solitary social media combined with poor face-to-face interaction skills.^(3,4)

Following the results of research conducted by Peterson⁽³⁾, the study's findings have implications for future treatments to help young people cope with public health measures like lockdowns, as well as to enhance public health and well-being; the authors view that counseling interventions through the Metaverse can become one of the most relevant options today.^(1,5)

Counseling is an activity that has been carried out since 1908 and was initiated by Frank Parsons, who is fondly called the *Father of The Guidance*.⁽⁶⁾ Initially, counseling aimed to help young people in America choose the careers that suit their needs.⁽⁷⁾ In these times, counseling is carried out to help individuals who are facing problems in their lives, both personal, social, career, studying, family life, and religious life. Human problems are increasingly complex due to the entry of the era of globalization which requires humans to act practically.⁽⁸⁾

The 21st century that we have entered is recognized by the development of science and technology, the development of communication and information systems, the increasingly tough competition in the standard of competition in the international market; which is not only in the form of products, but also what we have, such as thoughts that must continue to develop, work demands that require us to be more professional.⁽⁹⁾ It can be concluded that we cannot avoid the development of the times, but we can prepare ourselves to face the rapidly developing times. In addition to technological developments that occur rapidly, the problems faced by society are also increasingly complicated. We can equip ourselves with broad and specific knowledge, and get used to using technology to help people who have complex problems.

People's lives have recently undergone significant changes, especially in the fields of information technology and communication technology.^(10,11) One of the products resulting from technological developments is virtual reality (VR) through the Metaverse.^(12,13)

Development VR was first made in 1962 with a prototype object with the name Sensorama which was first made by Morton Heilig.⁽¹⁴⁾ The use of VR is increasing with the number of active users from 2014 to 2018 as many as 171 million in 2018.⁽¹⁵⁾ VR itself is used to develop the mental health and education sectors and other fields that make it possible to use VR. The use of VR in counseling activities has been done before. Based on research conducted by Okatrissa et al.⁽¹⁶⁾ which obtained positive results, the application of VR with cognitive behavior therapy theory - based can reduce anxiety in public speaking. This was successful when the subject had attended therapy sessions ten times. It can be concluded that counseling activities can be carried out through VR and other developing technologies, one of which is the Metaverse.

The Metaverse is a technology that allows humans to interact without having to meet in real time, and with a 3-dimensional view. In the Metaverse, the “real” human is replaced or described as the avatar of each individual who registers to the Metaverse. Every individual who wants to enter the world of the Metaverse must

use VR technology to be able to enjoy the activities that occur in the world of the Metaverse.⁽¹⁷⁾

In counseling activities, the use of the Metaverse is very possible to do. Clients who want to do counseling with mental health workers do not need to have face-to-face meetings.⁽²⁾

Counseling activities can be more effective and efficient because mental health workers and clients can meet in the Metaverse and if in urgent circumstances it does not take long to meet. Even though they do not meet in person, clients can still feel the same feelings when they do face-to-face counseling.^(18,19) This can happen because the client and mental health worker can still interact directly through the Metaverse world. The use of the Metaverse in counseling itself can be an advantage for the client who has an introverted personality type, because the client himself does not meet directly with the mental health worker.

This study aims to be a pilot project on pastoral care and mental health in the Metaverse and to become the main idea for future researchers to further investigate the application of pastoral care and mental health services in the Metaverse, and of course this research is the answer to an intervention that needs to be done to help young people who are experiencing mental health problems such as loneliness, anxiety, and depression due to lockdowns.^(20,22)

METHODS

The type of research conducted by the authors used a quantitative approach with a survey method, which is distributed using *Google Forms* with the target of young people (active students) at one of the Faith-Based Educational Institutions in Indonesia. In this study, there were 143 participants, 46 of 2nd semester students, 59 of 4th semester students, 35 of 6th semester students, and 3 of 8th semester students. In this study, the research subjects were today's young people, generation z, as the main users of the internet and vulnerable to mental health needs.

This study was conducted to test students' understanding of the Metaverse and students' opinion about mental health services provided at the Metaverse. All procedures involving human participants in this study complied with the institutional and/or national research committee's ethical standards, as well as the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its subsequent amendments or comparable ethical standards.

RESULTS

The results showed that 129 participants (90,2 %) knew about the Metaverse and 14 participants (9,8 %) didn't know about the Metaverse yet (table 1).

Table 1. The first question is about participants' knowledge of the Metaverse

No.	Do you know about the Metaverse?	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes	129	90,2 %
2	No	14	9,8 %

35 participants (24,4 %) viewed the Metaverse as a development technology and 35 participants (24,4 %) refer that the Metaverse is unique, and 22 respondents (15,3 %) stated that they did not know about the Metaverse (table 2).

Tabel 2. The second question is about participants' views on the Metaverse

No.	What do you think about the Metaverse?	Frequency	Percentage
1	Social Interaction	8	5,5 %
2	Technological Developments	35	24,4 %
3	Ease of Life	16	11,1 %
4	Virtual World	27	18,8 %
5	Unique	35	24,4 %
6	Threats	2	1,4 %
7	Don't Know	22	15,3 %

We obtained the results that 120 respondents (83,9 %) agree that mental health services can be in the Metaverse and 23 respondents (16, 1%) disagree that mental health services can exist in the metaverse (table 3).

Table 3. The third question is about participants' attitudes towards the Metaverse

No.	Do you agree that mental health services exist in the metaverse?	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes	120	83,9 %
2	No	23	16,1 %

Regarding the “reason for the respondent to answer yes”, the results showed that there are 91 participants (63,9 %) stating that the use of the Metaverse can be a solution in mental health. A total of 37 participants (25,9 %) stated that they did not know if the Metaverse could be a solution in mental health (Table 4).

Table 4. The fourth question is about their reasons for the attitudes chosen by the participants towards the Metaverse

No.	If you answered yes, please explain it!	Frequency	Percentage
1	Don't Know	37	25,9 %
2	User Security	3	2 %
3	Lack of Interaction	3	2 %
4	According to Theory	3	2 %
5	Solution	91	63,9 %
6	Doubtful	6	4,2 %

The results of the research regarding the provision of counseling services in the metaverse are found in Table 5. Regarding the mental health services required in the Metaverse, it was found that a total of 37 participants (25,9 %) wished that they be provide consulting services in the Metaverse, 35 participants (24,5 %) wanted individual counseling services provided in the Metaverse, and 30 participants (21 %) wanted information services provided in the Metaverse.

Table 5. The fifth question regarding the types of mental health services that will be on the Metaverse

No.	What types of mental health services will you need in the future on the Metaverse?	Frequency	Percentage
1	Orientation Service	9	6,3 %
2	Information Service	30	21 %
3	Group Counseling Service	4	2,8 %
4	Individual Counseling Service	35	24,5 %
5	Placement and Channeling Service	8	5,6 %
6	Content Mastery Service	10	7 %
7	Consulting Service	37	25,9 %
8	Mediation Service	6	4,2 %
9	Advocacy Service	1	0,7 %
10	Group Guidance Service	3	2,1 %

Main findings were fivefold: (i) The majority of young people today know very well what the Metaverse is. (ii) The majority of young people have a positive view of the existence of the Metaverse, that they perceive this as something unique and as a technological development. (iii) The majority of young people agree with the

counseling service at Metaverse. (iv) The reason they agree is because this counseling service at Metaverse can be a surefire solution to their current problems. (v) The majority of young people choose the type of individual counseling services and consultations on all mental health services provided on Metaverse.

DISCUSSION

Based on the research conducted, it shows that as many as 129 participants (90,2 %) already know about the Metaverse. As many as 1,000 participants agreed to carry out daily activities through the Metaverse, such as work, watching entertainment, studying, and others.⁽²³⁾ The research that the researchers conducted also showed that as many as 120 participants (83,9 %) agreed to provide mental health services through the Metaverse. According to research, 57,5 % of students who did counseling with mental health workers for one session, 26,5 % of students did two sessions of counseling, and 16,25 % of students did up to three sessions of counseling.⁽²⁴⁾

In addition, based on research conducted by Situmorang,⁽¹⁾ it is stated that counseling activities during the current COVID-19 pandemic really need technological assistance, because mental health workers and clients have not been able to carry out the counseling process face-to-face. This is in line with the results of research conducted by authors, 91 participants (63,9 %) agreed that mental health services in the Metaverse is a solution that can be developed in the future. This research is in line with the need for mental health that keeps up with technological developments that occur and the needs of the community are increasingly improving.

Mental health services in the Metaverse cannot be separated from weaknesses. Several participants stated that they have doubts about the security of user information, because they doubt that the user's identity can be widely disseminated. It is unethical to provide mental health services via the internet with the exception of urgent circumstances.⁽²⁵⁾ This was denied because when providing mental health services have the principle of confidentiality as a differentiator for themselves in a professional manner, ethically responsible, mental health workers are required to maintain the confidentiality of the client.⁽²⁶⁾ But on the other hand, mental health workers who provide services through the Metaverse also do not ignore user confidentiality which is a crucial issue in services through the Metaverse/online.⁽²⁷⁾

The results of research conducted on mental health services show that there are three service areas that are the main focus needed for mental health in the Metaverse, namely information services, individual counseling services and consulting services. Information service itself is one of the counseling services provided to individuals or groups with the aim of understanding various kinds of information, so that individuals or groups who receive information services have extensive knowledge about themselves and their surrounding environment, and can be taken into consideration when decision-making.⁽²⁸⁾ One of the counseling services that is at the heart of the heart is individual counseling services, because in individual counseling services clients can tell their personal problems and comprehensively can find a way out of these problems together with mental health workers, besides that they can also develop their potential to the fullest and independence with the help of a mental health worker.⁽²⁹⁾

In addition, there are also components in guidance and counseling services, namely consulting services, consulting services themselves are an effort to provide assistance to all members of the teaching staff in schools and to parents of students, to develop students in a better direction.³⁰

By using the Metaverse on existing services, it can have a positive influence on both the client and the mental health worker, because the mental health worker can provide services as soon as possible according to their needs, and clients can receive these services without having to travel out of the house (due to lockdowns). Therefore, the Metaverse counseling (or "*counseling-verse*") can be developed to become a means of conducting online counseling activities as pastoral care services,⁽²⁾ to help young people who are experiencing mental health problems such as loneliness, anxiety, and depression.

CONCLUSION

The development of technology that exists today makes people's daily activities can be done online. One of the products of the times is VR. Examples of activities that can be done in VR, include meetings, socializing, playing, studying, and others.

Another activity that can be done is service. Mental health services in the Metaverse can also be a technological advancement that is very useful for humans. Based on the results of the research that has been carried out, it can be concluded that the counseling service at the Metaverse is one type of appropriate intervention and is the choice for young people today.

Through this "*counseling-verse*" it is hoped that it can be a surefire solution to help young people who experience mental health issues such as loneliness, anxiety, and depression; as a result of public health measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 (such as lockdowns).

Apart from that, the results of this study reinforce the findings previously made by Situmorang² that pastoral care and counseling is very suitable for today's youth online. Especially now that Metaverse will become a

new world in the implementation of counseling services. This should be an opportunity for spiritual/pastoral counselors to be able to provide pastoral care and counseling services in a more creative and enjoyable way.

Suggestions

Furthermore researchers can apply mental health services in the Metaverse in real terms to be able to test the effectiveness and efficiency of mental health services in the Metaverse, especially for pastoral care and counseling in the future. In addition, with the results of the research that authors have done, it is hoped that mental health workers can study the Metaverse and mental health services holistically and specifically in order to provide mental health services in the Metaverse effectively and efficiently. Therefore, there is a need for debriefing conducted by pastoral care and educational institutions for prospective mental health workers in dealing with the application of mental health services in the Metaverse, and professionals can provide an education that aims to reduce the risks involved in performing pastoral care and mental health services in the Metaverse.

Implications

The results of this research provide a new response to mental health services in pastoral care and counseling. The old way of providing face-to-face mental health services can be reduced by leveraging technological developments. Based on this research, it is hoped that pastoral care and educational policy makers, educators, and mental health workers can work together to be able to continue to effectively develop mental health in the Metaverse and be able to implement interventions that are suitable for pastoral care and mental health services in the Metaverse.

Direction for Future Research

The results of this research can be used as a reference for further research in a more developed direction. Overall mental health services in the Metaverse still require special development because no one has tried mental health services in the Metaverse⁽¹³⁾ and it is hoped that pastoral care and educational institutions can work together to test mental health services in the Metaverse. In addition, further researchers can focus their research on interventions that can be provided to mental health services in the Metaverse, whether existing interventions can work effectively on mental health services in the Metaverse. And there is no system that ensures user data or information can be maintained safely. This is also a focus of attention for researchers interested in researching mental health services in the Metaverse.⁽¹⁰⁾ In addition, researchers need to investigate further on the issue of transference and countertransference in the counseling services in the Metaverse.⁽¹⁾

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The author declares no conflict of interest in this paper.

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